


Texas Department of Health

The Commissioner's Report to the Board of Health

April 15, 2004

Administration



New Personnel: Chief Operating Officer, Budget Director, and Accounting Director

Randy Fritz, MPA, is joining the leadership team of the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) as Chief Operating Officer (COO). He will be serving as the Acting Chief Operating Officer for TDH beginning April 19 through August 31, 2004.

Randy most recently served as Project Director, California Healthy Families Project, for MAXIMUS, Inc. He was responsible for all aspects of implementation and operation of a major roll-out and expansion of CHIP in the State of California. Before joining MAXIMUS in 2001, Randy was the Bureau Chief, Children's Health Insurance Program, for TDH beginning in 1998 and was Executive Assistant to the Commissioner of Health from 1997 to 1998.

Two existing TDH staff members have been appointed to DSHS positions: Ms. Kathleen Barnett will serve as the DSHS Budget Director and Mr. Wilson Day has been selected as DSHS Accounting Director.

Kathleen has served as the Bureau Chief for Budget and Revenue at the TDH since December 2000 and, prior to that, she was the Division Director for three years. She came to TDH as a Budget Analyst in February 1994.

Wilson Day was a teacher and high school coach before joining the Comptroller of Public Accounts in 1989 in the Human Resources office. In his 14 years at the Comptroller's Office, he held various positions including personnel officer, direct deposit coordinator, USAS and USPS functional tester, manager of Payroll Research and Compliance, and manager of Expenditure Research and Assistance. Wilson joined the TDH in July 2004, as the Bureau Chief for Financial Services.



South Texas Health Care System Business Improvement Review

TDH Business Improvement staff conducted a review of the South Texas Health Care System (STHCS). STHCS is in its forty-seventh year of operation. The facility generally served as a long-term hospital for indigent tuberculosis patients and occasionally indigent patients with non-infectious chronic diseases. Over the years, as the tuberculosis caseload steadily declined, the facility provided a broader array of inpatient and outpatient services. By the 1990s, STHCS had evolved into a high-volume outpatient clinic. The business

improvement review makes 17 recommendations to promote improvements in a number of areas, including:

- Determine STHCS Direction
- Balance Expansion and Other Factors
- Improve Physician Scheduling
- Improve Medicare and Medicaid Cost Reporting
- Improve Purchasing Activities
- Increase Coordination with Public Health Region 11
- Enhance Maintenance Resources for STHCS

Business Improvement staff will brief TDH executive management on the report and assist as needed in implementation of approved recommendations. *For more information, contact Elaine Powell, Business Improvement Office, at (512) 458-7303 or e-mail elaine.powell@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Program Updates



National Public Health Week (NPHW)

National Public Health Week was celebrated April 5-9. A video conference co-sponsored with the Texas Association of Local Health Officials and the Texas Public Health Association served as the kick-off for NPHW. The conference was held in the TDH boardroom and broadcast live to all public health regions, local health departments, and hospital facilities. Seven experts from the fields of public health, mental health and substance abuse addressed the national theme, *Eliminating Health Disparities: Communities Moving from Statistics to Solutions*. The speakers provided excellent information on health disparities in Texas and offered solutions that communities are using to address these issues.

NPHW events around the state included poster and essay contests for students, health fairs and screenings, health walks and additional awareness activities conducted by TDH regional offices.

Dr. Sharilyn Stanley, TDH associate commissioner for Disease Control and Prevention, briefed staff of the Texas Legislature on the problem of health disparities and implications in race, ethnicity, age, and geography. Her presentation included three areas where TDH is working specifically to address health disparities: promoting increased regular physical activity and decreasing obesity among racial and ethnic minorities, discouraging tobacco use among minority youth, and promoting immunizations among different populations and in certain areas of the state.

An extensive amount of work went into making Public Health Week a success, and I want to acknowledge the efforts of the Public Health Week Planning Committee and commend them on a job well done and also thank everyone who supported the committee in accomplishing their task.



11th Annual Conference on the Management of the Adult Sex Offender

The conference was sponsored by the Council on Sex Offender Treatment and was held March 7-9 in Galveston. There were 280 attendees from various disciplines including probation, parole, treatment providers, polygraph examiners, and legal officials. The keynote speaker was James Haaven who is currently in private practice focusing on consultation and training. For 24 years he was the director of sex offender programming for persons with developmental disabilities in Oregon State Hospital in Salem, Oregon. He has 31 years of experience working with persons with sexual offending behavior. He is currently contracted with the Washington and Wisconsin Sexually Violent Predator Programs. *For more information, contact Allison Taylor, Council on Sex Offender Treatment, Division of Professional Licensing and Certification, at (512) 834-6628 or e-mail allison.taylor@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Passes Federal Acceptance Testing

TDH Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) is pleased to announce that the EBT Project passed Federal Acceptance Testing by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) on March 19. The EBT system will provide an electronic process for the issuance, redemption, and settlement of WIC food benefits and replace the current manual paper-based system, and enhance and improve client access to and delivery of WIC Program benefits. The Project has been approved for pilot commencement in El Paso, effective June 1. USDA commended the department for a job well done on an extremely complex project. *For more information, contact Ray Krzesniak, EBT Planning Division, Bureau of Nutrition Services, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3471, or e-mail ray.krzesniak@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Health Information Portability & Accountability Act (HIPAA) & Schools

A school-related HIPAA question-and-answer document authored by TDH staff members appears in the March issue of the National Association of School Nurses Newsletter. The document represents collaboration between the Adolescent & School Health Program, the TDH HIPAA Office, the Immunizations Division and the Office of General Counsel. The article can be viewed at <http://nasn.allenpress.com/pdfserv/i1047-4757-019-02-0001.pdf> on page 15. *For more information, contact Michelle McComb, Adolescent and School Health Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 3307, or e-mail michelle.mccomb@tdh.state.tx.us.*



School-Based Health Center RFP Released

TDH Adolescent and School Health Program announces the expected availability of fiscal year (FY) 2005 Maternal and Child Health Block Grant funds to provide start-up funding for model school-based health centers that deliver conventional primary and preventive health services and related social services to a school-age population on a school campus. Funds are intended to support school-based health centers (SBHC) that meet the health care needs of students and their families.

The competitive Request for Proposals (RFP) for FY 2005 funding for SBHCs was released March 26. Applications must be received by 2:00 p.m. CDT, May 7. Eligible applicants include school districts, charter schools, and school district cooperatives. Approximately \$375,000 is expected to be available to fund up to three (3) contracts with a maximum of \$125,000 per award. It is expected that contracts will begin on or about

September 1, and will be made for a 12-month budget period within a project period of three (3) years. A copy of the competitive RFP may be accessed and downloaded via the TDH web site at: <http://www.tdh.state.tx.us/schoolhealth/default.htm>. For more information, contact John Dillard, Adolescent and School Health Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2782, or john.dillard@tdh.state.tx.us.



Scores for FY 2005 Traffic Safety Proposal

TDH Safe Riders will be awarded \$1,149,000 from the Texas Department of Transportation for FY05. Each year Safe Riders must submit a request for funding and compete against other programs across Texas. Safe Riders began in 1985, with the passage of the Texas seat belt law and serves as a statewide traffic safety program with interventions focusing on child passenger safety. For more information, contact Frank Luera, Safe Riders Traffic Safety Program, at (512) 458-7111, ext 6513, or e-mail frank.luera@tdh.state.tx.us.



Prematurity Summit

The Austin March of Dimes Prematurity Summit is scheduled for May 20. This will be the first in a series of summits held across the state to raise public awareness about the problem of prematurity and to serve as a call to action. Governor Rick Perry, Health and Human Services Executive Commissioner Albert Hawkins and Health Commissioner Eduardo Sanchez will speak at the event, along with several local business leaders, a leader from the faith community and the family of a premature child. The location has yet to be determined. For more information, contact Chan McDermott, Perinatal Health Program, at (512) 458-7796 or e-mail chan.mcdermott@tdh.state.tx.us.



Birth Defects State Leadership Award

The Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division received the State Leadership Award in Salt Lake City at the January annual meeting of the National Birth Defects Prevention Network. Texas was honored for conducting innovative trainings, paying close attention to data quality, covering the entire state (something not done by all other states, but ours is particularly diverse), and making use of its birth defects data for research and prevention. Birth defects team members also received blue ribbons for posters at the same meeting: *Medical Records v. Interview Responses* won first prize in the Case Ascertainment Methods category and *A Content Analysis of U.S. Daily Newspapers* won one of two first prizes in the Prevention, Intervention, and Public Policy category. For more information, contact Amy Case, EPI Texas Birth Defects Monitoring Division, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 2814, or e-mail amy.case@tdh.state.tx.us.



Immunization Week(s) of the Americas

Texas is participating in the Immunization Week of the Americas, April 25 through May 1, an initiative of the US-Mexico Border Health Commission, Pan American Health Organization, Health Resources and Service Administration, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and other partners. The dates coincide with National Infant Immunization Week. Most of the activities will be in the border areas. The effort grew out of the desire to emphasize the importance of childhood immunizations throughout the Americas and to have a united message. The Office of Border Health and Immunization Division are collaborating in the observation of this week. In addition to the week in April, there are two other immunization weeks planned in July and October. The week in October will focus, not only on immunizations, but also on chronic diseases and other health issues that are of concern to the border areas. *For more information, contact Lupe Mandujano Garcia, Immunization Division, Public Information, Education, and Training Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6021, or e-mail lupem.garcia@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Vaccines Being Packaged and Shipped to Reduce Waste Due to Expiration

The Vaccine Services Branch of the Immunization Division is working with the Pharmacy Division to begin shipping Diphtheria-Tetanus (DT) vaccine in a manner that will significantly reduce the amount of vaccine wasted due to expiration. The packaging of this vaccine has changed from a multi-dose vial (10 doses) to a package of 10 single-dose pre-filled syringes. The Pharmacy Division has agreed to split the 10 dose packages in order to provide only the number of doses of vaccine that a clinic can use in a 60-day timeframe. *For more information, contact Jack Sims, Immunization Division, Vaccine Services Branch, at (512) 458-7111, ext. 6215, or e-mail jack.sims@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Pharmacy Inventory Control System (PICS) Update

PICS implementation continues for all anticipated programs except Immunizations and HIV. Headquarters, Region 8, its sub-offices and San Antonio Metropolitan Health District started utilizing PICS for TB, STD, and Women's Health.

The PICS Project Team continues to coordinate with the Immunization Program. Planning includes: Reviewing and prioritizing their Engineering Change Proposals (ECP) based on modified PICS requirements, pilot testing, and implementing new vaccine management business processes. Modifications are essentially on schedule. Planning continues for pilot test training to occur in March for the Region 7 – Temple area.

Northrop Grumman IT delivered and TDH installed an improved PICS production software version. TDH Pharmacy and TDH ASC IT team members identified and reported remaining problems to Northrop Grumman IT for correction.

The PICS Project Team continues to address issues surrounding interfaces with other systems. A basic Texas Wide Integrated Client Encounter System (TWICES) interface will be available for initial pilot testing, and a final version will become available prior to pilot test completion. Coordination with CDC continues to solve and test PICS-VACMAN interface issues. Planning to resolve technical issues and test the PICS-HIV2000 interface, and to train HIV trainers and retail pharmacies continues. *For more information, contact Dinny Smith, Pharmacy Division, at (512) 458-7500, ext. 2494, or e-mail dinny.smith@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Influenza (FLU)

The flu activity level for Texas, week 7, Feb 15 to 21, is sporadic, (level 5 for CDC reporting purposes). Sporadic means there are isolated cases of lab confirmed influenza in the state; but overall influenza-like-illness (ILI) activity is not increased.

The avian flu strain, H5N2, has been found in a poultry flock in Gonzalez County. Even though this has been identified as a highly pathogenic avian flu strain (to poultry), this is not the same strain causing avian flu outbreaks and human infections in Asia. That strain is H5N1. The H5N2 strain in Gonzalez County poses no threat to humans or food. Additional information may be found at the Web site for the Texas Animal Health Commission at <http://www.tahc.state.tx.us/>. Additional information regarding the H5N1 strain in Asia may be found at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/>. *For more information, contact Neil Pascoe, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail neil.pascoe@tdh.state.tx.us.*



The 29th Annual Physician's Assistant Conference

On February 19-21, Tony Fuentes and Pamela Winscher exhibited the Infectious Disease Infectious and Surveillance Division booth at the 29th Annual Physician's Assistant Conference at the Fairmont Hotel in Dallas. Attendees included physician assistants, pharmaceutical companies, and service providers to the healthcare industry. Mr. Fuentes and Ms. Winscher provided information on reporting, promoted hepatitis awareness, explained foodborne illness, and discussed infectious disease in general. They also provided contact information to attendees about the division's public health outreach efforts, exchange of information, and educational resources. *For more information, contact Gary Heseltine, Infectious Disease Epidemiology & Surveillance Division, at (512) 458-7676 or e-mail gary.heseltine@tdh.state.tx.us.*



TDH Emergency Preparedness Exercise

HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division nursing staff participated in the TDH Emergency Preparedness Exercise. The exercise identified that the agency would benefit from a unified resource listing for skills such as nursing, medicine, and epidemiology, to allow rapid contact when an event occurs. It was also determined that the Texas HIV Medication Program might serve as a resource to distribute medications in response to an emergency event while awaiting drug supplies to arrive from the national stockpile. *For more information, contact Linda S. Moore, HIV/STD Clinical Resources Division, at (512) 490-2505 or e-mail linda.moore@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Regional Updates

Region 1



Safe Place Project

Region 1 is looking to participate in the Safe Place Project. Project Safe Place is a national youth outreach program that educates thousands of young people every year about the dangers of running away or trying to resolve difficult threatening situations on their own. This initiative is designed to get the whole community involved to provide safe havens and resources for youth in crisis.

Safe Place creates a network of Safe Place locations such as youth friendly businesses, schools, fire stations, libraries, Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs and other appropriate public buildings that display the distinctive yellow and black Safe Place sign. These Safe Place sites extend the doors of the youth emergency shelter or youth service agency throughout the community. Youth are easily able to access immediate help wherever they are.

How it works - A youth in crisis walks into a designated Safe Place location (identified by a Safe Place sign or decal) and tells the first available employee that they need Safe Place help. The employee will call the local Safe Place contact phone number. The Safe Place volunteer or staff person will arrive to talk with the youth and transport him or her to the agency for counseling, support, and/or a place to stay.

Once at the agency, counselors meet with the youth and provide support, resources and help. They make sure the youth and their families receive the help and professional referrals they need. The youth serving agency helps the youth and the family through a difficult time or crisis situation. We are currently waiting for approval. *For more information, contact Tricia Vowels, Region 1, at (806) 767-0414 or e-mail tricia.vowels@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 4/5



Texas Mission of Mercy (TMOM)

On April 23-24, 2004 volunteer dentists, doctors, nurses and medical personnel will give their time and skills in providing teeth cleaning, dental extractions, fillings and surgery, eye exams and vision care, emergency medical care, health screenings and women's diagnostic care for East Texas low income families and individuals who cannot afford care. Some of the Region 4/5 North staff will join with Texas Dental Association, Texas Dentists for Healthy Smiles, Youth With A Mission, University of Texas Health Center, Tyler, area churches, Trinity Mother Frances Hospital, Tyler, East Texas Medical Center, Tyler, Salvation Army, Northeast Texas Public Health District and others at Youth With a Mission headquarters in Garden Valley near Lindale. In November 2002, services

valued at over \$500,000 were provided at no cost to economically disadvantaged individuals from the East Texas area. *For more information, contact Dr. Paul McGaha, Regional Director 4/5 North, at (903) 533-5264 or e-mail paul.mcgaha@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 6/5



SARS Preparedness Tabletop Exercise

On March 24, members of the regional Epidemiology Response Team participated in a SARS (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) Preparedness tabletop exercise sponsored by the Los Angeles Airport (LAX) Quarantine Station. The LAX Quarantine Station (CDC- Division of Global Migration and Quarantine) has jurisdiction over all ports in Texas. The preparedness tabletop exercise was conducted near Bush Intercontinental Airport and convened representatives from U.S. Customs, Houston Police Department, the airline industry, local and state public health, and area hospitals. The exercise depicted a scenario in which a fully loaded Boeing 777 departed from China and was on-approach to Bush Intercontinental Airport carrying two passengers who were exhibiting signs and symptoms compatible with SARS. SARS was added to the list of quarantinable diseases in April 2003. In the first segment of the exercise, participants discussed the legal authority of federal, state and local entities to isolate and quarantine individuals. The second segment covered the public health response and available medical resources in the area. *For more information, contact Luis Gonzalez, Epidemiology Response Team, Public Health Preparedness Program, at (713) 767-3343 or e-mail luis.gonzalez@tdh.state.tx.us.*



SARS

Region 6/5 South has hired a Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) Coordinator, David Olinger. Since his arrival, David has reviewed additional dispensing sites, secured Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) with dispensing sites, identified rural county volunteers, and reviewed an alternate Receiving, Storing and Staging (RSS) warehouse. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and U.S. Marshals Service conducted an evaluation of regional SNS activities on March 22-23, 2004. The evaluation included local public health department stakeholders, Division of Emergency Management, and Region 6/5 South. The evaluation provided local health departments and Region 6/5 South an opportunity to articulate to CDC, U.S. Marshals Service, and TDH - SNS State Coordinator specific progress in SNS planning and future SNS preparedness activities. *For more information, contact David Olinger, Strategic National Stockpile Coordinator, Public Health Preparedness Program, at (713) 767-3150 or e-mail david.olinger@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 7



Texas Vaccines for Children update

Just over a year ago, 1st and 2nd year medical students at Texas A&M University formed an organization called Health Circus and enrolled in the Texas Vaccines for Children program. Health Circus conducts special clinics in the communities in and around Brazos County. In addition to providing vaccines, each clinic offers free services including vision screening, well child check-ups, mental health exams, high blood pressure and diabetic screening and dental health. And they do all this in the atmosphere of a circus. The clinics include face painting, a moonwalk, balloon animals and many more fun activities for the entire family.

A big part of their success has been their partnerships with such organizations as Blinn School of Nursing, Texas A&M Dentistry and Rural Public Health schools and many others in the communities. To date, they have conducted six clinics and have administered over 250 vaccines to 100 children.

These dynamic and creative students have extended a challenge to other universities to develop similar programs in their communities! *For more information, contact Maribeth Bartz, Immunizations, Region 7, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2104, or e-mail maribeth.bartz@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Burleson County Commissioner's court meeting

On February 23, Region 7 Zoonosis Control Program staff attended the Burleson County Commissioner's Court meeting in Caldwell to provide information to county officials about the minimum requirements of rabies control. The Court discussed testing of rabies suspect animals and provisions for quarantining domestic animals that bite people. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Zoonosis Control Program activities

On February 27, Region 7 Zoonosis Control Veterinarian presented a regional Zoonosis Control perspective on bioterrorism and disaster response planning at the semi-annual meeting of the Texas Veterinary Medical Association Disaster Preparedness Committee in College Station. The committee members were reminded that veterinarians may have a dual role in a bioterrorism event in that they may need to assist with both human and veterinary medical issues. The Zoonosis Control programs will support TVMA's efforts to establish a disaster preparedness veterinary contact in each Texas County during 2004.

On March 15, Zoonosis Control Veterinarian presented an overview of regional Zoonosis Control program activities to elected officials, peace officers, and animal control officers attending Association of Certified Cruelty Investigators training in Georgetown. The officers also heard from social welfare agencies and government prosecutors about the relationship between animal cruelty and child, spouse, and elder abuse. The goal of the

course was to train officers to pursue animal cruelty cases to the full extent of the law in order to prevent the perpetrator's cruelty tendencies from escalating to human abuses.

On March 17 - 18, Zoonosis Control Program hosted a Basic Animal Control Officer (ACO) Training Course in Temple. Nineteen students from animal control and animal welfare agencies attended. The students were from Region 2/3, Region 7, and Region 9. Students from Region 7 represented counties of Bell, Brazos, Burnet, Hill, Lee, San Saba, and Williamson counties. This course presented information on rabies control, animal control laws, animal capture and restraint, humane care of animals, and zoonotic diseases. *For more information, contact Beverlee E. Nix, Zoonosis Control Program, at (254) 778-6744, ext. 2451, or e-mail beverlee.nix@tdh.state.tx.us.*

Region 9/10



World TB Day

Region 9/10 co-sponsored the following World TB Day activities: International TB Symposium for Public Health Workers, Binational TB Health Card Festivities in Tijuana/San Diego, TB press release to area newspapers. *For more information, contact Gale Morrow, Deputy Regional Director, at (915) 834-7777 or e-mail gale.morrow@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Public Health Week

The Regional office sponsored a Special National Public Health Week event entitled *Eliminating Health Disparities: Communities Moving from Statistics to Solutions*. The event included presentations by Dr. Jack Bristol, Dean of the UT Houston School of Public Health Regional Program in El Paso, and Dr. Robert Anders, Associate Dean of the UT El Paso College of Health Sciences. Dr. Lawrence N. Nickey received special recognition for his many contributions to public health. *For more information contact Blanca Serrano, Office of Border Health, at (915) 834-7690 or e-mail blanca.serrano@tdh.state.tx.us.*



Immigrant Death Study

Regional staff assisted researchers from CDC and TDH injury prevention staff in the collection of data relating to deaths among undocumented immigrants crossing the south west border in Arizona, New Mexico, and West Texas. This initiative is involving area binational agencies that will help develop prevention strategies. *For more information, contact Dr. Miguel A. Escobedo, Regional Director, at (915) 834-7681 or e-mail miguel.escobedo@tdh.state.tx.us.*